

Talking points  
Senate Bill 2470  
Senate Bill 2459  
Tuesday, March 13, 2007

These two bills represent a significant toughening of state laws regarding the use of firearms by criminals.

Senate Bill 2470 increases the statutory maximum penalty to up to 10 years for previously convicted felons found in possession of a firearm. The current statutory maximum sentence is up to three years.

(The Senate sponsor of the bill was Sen. Ed Morgan, R-Hattiesburg, and the House sponsor was Rep. Jeff Smith, D-Columbus, chairman of the House Judiciary B Committee.)

Senate Bill 2459 increases statutory penalty to 10 years for previously convicted felon who uses a firearm during the commission of any felony.

The 10 year sentence must be consecutive to the underlying felony and can not be reduced or suspended. Current statutory sentence for either convicted felon or first offender is five years.

(The Senate sponsor was Sen. Perry Lee, R-Mendenhall, and the House sponsor was Chairman Smith.)

Law enforcement officers for years have said, rightly, that state laws were too lenient in this area. Today, we are correcting that.

These laws will make it easier for the state to prosecute criminals who use or possess firearms, without infringing at all on the Second Amendment right of Americans to bear arms.

This is a reasonable approach to solving a real problem. I am pleased the Legislature passed these bills and pleased to sign them.